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Summertime Flowers

A familiar landscape along H-136, Southeast Nebraska, June 22, 2020

# Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha A Magazine for Small Towns & Rural America

# Cases "tested positive" for Covid-19 in our "Country Neighborhood."

Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Date May 30	Nemaha 3	Otoe 7	Johnson 6	Richardson 1
June 9	4	11	6	1
June 20	5	13	6	5
June 23	5	15	6	5
June 27	5	16	6	5

This data shows that these southeast Nebraska counties increased in Covid-19 cases through the month of June. July data, if attainable, will be included here next month.

# Inside

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# Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

> P.O. Box 126 Peru, Nebraska 68421

countryneighbor@windstream.net
Online at yourcountryneighbor.com

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Ralph Waldo Emerson

# The Most Recent Covid-19 Hero

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Not since the Lone Ranger have heroes worn masks!

In the April issue I wrote about the new heroes who have been referrred to since then as our "new front line heroes." Included are essential workers, from first responders to grocery clerks.

The most recent heroes are those who wear masks; they are helping to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Wearing a mask has two functions; to protect oneself from exposure to the virus, and second, (heroically), to protect others from possible exposure to yourself.

So if someone makes fun of you for wearing a mask, remember that you are doing your part to protect them and anyone else around you. Until there's a vaccine, a mask is one way to help prevent the spread of Covid-19 when around others.

Now everyone can be a hero!

# **July Writers & Contributors**

Devon Adams - 6 & 7

Stephen Hassler - 2, 5 & 12

Merri Johnson - 10

Dorothy Rieke - 4

Janet Sobczyk - 5

Thank You!

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# Your Country Neighbor

Your "2-cups-of-coffee" companion including local photos and articles with the flavor of rural America.

Your Country Neighbor can be found online at; yourcountryneighbor.com

Please inform your relatives and friends who live outside our 'country neighborhood' and those "stay at home" folks.

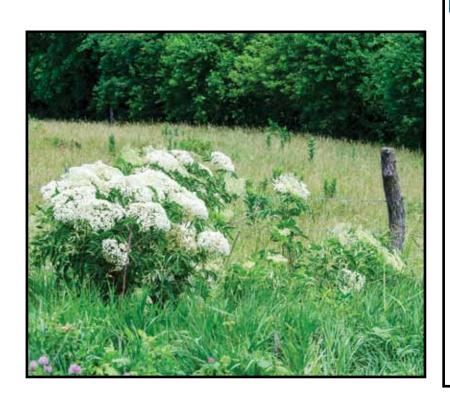
<sup>&</sup>quot;Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."



The Morton Mansion; getting some beauty work done.



Above; Black-eyed Susans and Below; Elderberry



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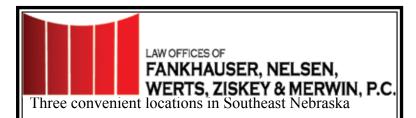
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## Give Your Child A "Head Start"

How important are a child's first few years in the education process? Contrary to popular thought, the years before the kindergarten experience often predict the rate of advancement in grade levels. It is important for parents to be aware of what their role is in their child's preparation for school.

The first skills critical to learning that should be in place as the child enters kindergarten are strong language skills and socialization skills. Language skills develop through talking, conversation, and listening to someone read. Reading stories to children develops vocabulary, increases knowledge, and often instills a love for reading.

Socialization is gained through sharing, waiting, and listening. Because youngsters learn many concepts through play and interaction, contact with other children before kindergarten days develops these skills.

Developing language skills and socialization skills evolve through certain practices. The following are suggestions for opportunities for learning before school attendance:

- Allow children to play with others, but be sure that playmates set good examples. Temper tantrums and other undesirable actions are often adopted.
- Read to your children. This action helps children express their thoughts and ideas. Reading time also provides opportunities for questions and discussions. This practice may instill a lifelong interest in reading.
- Hug your children and let them know through your actions that you love them. Children who are loved are children who display self-confidence and self-assurance.
- Always give support in the form of encouragement. Children need to feel that someone cares and supports their actions.
- Teach your children the basics such as kindness, courtesy, responsibility, and respect for others and their property.
- Listen. Listening is important during children's entire lives. Ceasing to listen means no more two-way communication. Always be interested in your children and what they are doing and saying.
- Spend time with your children. Family outings offer opportunities for eating together, playing together, and conversation. Visits to libraries and museums represent valuable learning experiences.
- Exercise with your children. Take walks, ride bicycles, and play outdoor games. These benefit all involved.
- Teach your children about responsibility by asking them to do small tasks such as feeding pets, picking up toys and helping with household tasks.
- 10 Discuss school days and what will be expected of them. Be positive about the school experience.

Someone once observed, "Parent's lap makes learning a snap." That is essentially true, for parents can contribute much to their children's success in school by giving them "head starts." Parents' input, guidance, and efforts are rewarded when they observe their children's growth in knowledge, their development, and their achievements.

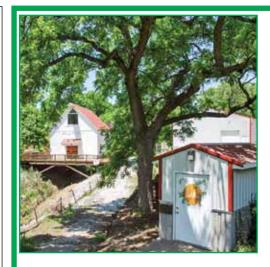
#### Unearthed

Janet Sobczyk, © 2020, Omaha

Spring weeds popped up 'round the stone bench she sat, plucked, yanked dug out the roots tap, tap, what's that? trowel hit rock wait, more than that brushed away dirt it's mosaic! a stepping stone blue birds in flight pale pink flowers she sat in awe examined it perfect for her love of nature felt like a gift buried treasure from Mother Earth or previous owners long gone.



...it's mosaic! a stepping stone blue birds in flight - pale pink flowers...



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### Life's Essentials

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Since I've been practicing "social distancing" by working mostly from home, I've been thinking about what is essential for living. Thankfully, my utilities were not an issue this Spring, but food, shopping, and errands require careful planning.

Even if I'm only going to drive around and take photos from my car window, I still have to think about bringing a lunch and where I'm going to find restrooms. Restaurants might be closed, Caseys can be crowded, government offices can be an option, but some are unfamiliar and some are locked, all of which make planning difficult.

Recently I took photos of an eagle's nest and some gulls that were fishing from a pond. No one around but me and the birds. That works so that I can bring you photos and these 'words' without interacting with anyone. Plus, email is a blessing for me during this time. I can send ad revisions for approval and receive changes by return emails from my advertisers. But I miss visiting them in person.

In this publication I offer you photos I shoot and articles that others send me (plus my "Window" article). I am not one who investigates events. Reporters have their job and I have mine. Mine is more on the entertainment side of publishing; articles about the human condition, photos of sports, nature, and rural landscapes. So I try to help make your coffee break a little sweeter. *Your Country Neighbor* is not essential for living, but I hope it makes your living better. It does for me.





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#### ROLLING THUNDER

In the close and humid dark of a summer night, the air was shaking with ominous vibrations that could have been early echoes of an evil gang of motorcycle riders who were coming to ransack the village. Or maybe it was a troop of trucks gunning their powerful engines, as they raced along the gravel roads of the wild back country surrounding the little cluster of homes hidden in the river bluffs. Then again, it seemed to be coming from the sky itself. It was a storm, and it's army of clouds armed with electric charges was slashing through the peaceful air. Inside the wall of thunder, the flashing swords came closer and closer. As the forces of nature crashed over the hill, trees bent and begged not to be torn apart. Hail pounded into houses and cut holes into siding and shingles. Car windshields imploded, raining shattered glass on seats, as buckets of water were flooding the streets. And then it was gone, leaving shock and awe in the backwash of it's fury.

# Poetry

Devon Adams, Peru

#### A BLUE ANGEL

His notes were warbled with easy grace and not a thought that they might be his last. His beauty was a simple thing that blazed with iridescence, a jewel in the crown of feathers that some birds own. Light as a puff of cotton, his flight was a streak of shine so fast that it seemed to be a passing thought, gone before you turned your head. But his tiny body carved a lovely sculpture on a limb, as he sang a song of joy in the mornings of his life. The cat was faster though, than Mr. Indigo Bunting, and had the last word, just yesterday.

#### THE RIGHT BROTHERS

Fluttering in a stiff wind is hard when your wings are big flaps on a little body. But when a storm is being a bully, throwing water at you, along with nasty hail, survival is tricky. The Right Brothers Company must have done the design work on these colorful critters with delicate wings. They fly through the air like little planes, and the engines are the pilots, because these beautiful butterflies are the creatures writing poetry in our gardens, as they trace lines and circles and dots and dashes in the search for sweet nectar targets.

MR. & MRS.

You can tell they've

been there awhile. because their legs are stiff and settled. Their finish is weathered from so many days and storms and heat and cold, not to mention the wind, which never stops blowing. They are sitting near the back porch, next to the garden that has lots of green beans wanting to be picked, and tomatoes taking time to ripen. Cucumbers are getting ahead of the pickle jars, and lettuce is crisp. For such an old couple, they are very sturdy yet. But one of these days their joints will rot out and one of them will topple into kindling. Then the young couple who live in the house will have to buy a new pair of chairs for the patio.

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#### **OLD GLORY**

It had been a hard night of battle, but the flag still waved, flaunting it's tattered threads to the defeated enemy soldiers. In the glow of dawn was a promise that this sweet country would continue to stand against forces who will always want to steal the precious rewards of freedom that our founding fathers dreamed of, and then fought for and won. Our foes wear masks of deception when they try to win our hearts and minds with empty promises of easy living and wealth without effort or work. But in their eyes are the lies that will steal our joy and independence. Being free today is a victory, but staying free is an everyday war.

#### **TODAY COUNTS**

As we celebrate birthdays, ours and others, at some point it dawns on our foggy minds that we are counting down the days to our ends. It is a shock to realize that someday will be our last day, and we will cross to the other side of now. The many old stones with names engraved beside the dates of birth and death can't tell us what to expect, but the blood that runs in our veins and arteries is a ribbon that has come from our past. Those "old folks," who are silent sleepers under their quilts of clover, are still part of us now, and would probably tell us, if they could speak, that we should pay attention and live our lives with concentration and appreciation for the blessings of our senses and the grace that is our natural world.





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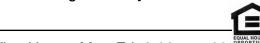
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# Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburr

This last month has been notable for home appliance failures.

First, there was the stormy night of June 3. The wind was wild enough for me to take to the basement around midnight. I told Hubby I was going down. He groggily replied that he was not. He wanted a good night's sleep in his own bed before leaving early the next morning on his annual fishing trip to Calamus Lake. We both slept well in our separate spaces. Come morning, I saw no serious tree damage, so all was well, I thought.

Until I tried to watch television that evening. Hmmm. No NET or local networks. I went outside and looked up at the sky where the TV antenna was supposed to be. It was lying on the roof, missing a significant piece that I later retrieved from the yard on the opposite side of the house. I could have watched any number of programs through Hulu, but I thought, What the heck; I have plenty to keep me occupied without TV for a few days. (Indeed, I did a fair amount of reading and actually wrote two more chapters in my novel. But that's another story.)

When Hubby called to check in later that evening, I didn't mention the antenna. Nothing he could do about it from a boat out on Calamus Lake.

Sunday came. Hubby returned. He took the news of the busted antenna in stride and ordered a new one right away. That was the easy part.

The real challenge was re-connecting the home-made, two-piece antenna pole. The light-weight cast aluminum coupling had broken. Obviously a beefier coupling was in order. Of course, you can't just buy such a thing ready-made. A local electrician friend had a piece of appropriately sized steel pipe to serve as a new connector. Then Hubby needed to drill holes through the connector and each of the two poles in order to bolt the whole business together. That wasn't too tricky. Of course, the poles tended to wobble in the connector since they were not made to fit together snugly. Shimming with slivers of red cedar scrap added some stability, but I wouldn't bet on it surviving the next windstorm.

At any rate, Hubby got all of his tools and equipment up onto the roof and managed to re-install everything without falling off. It was one of those 90-degree days, and the shingles, as well as everything else up there, got super hot. By the time the job was finished, he was pretty much done in for the day. And ready to concede that the next time, we will be hiring someone else to install a proper flag pole antenna. No more getting up on the roof for him.

Fast forward to June 12. The antenna is still fine. Not so, the washing machine. When I went to transfer clothes from the washer to the dryer,











Navy



Debby

Steve

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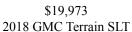
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everything was suspiciously still wet. Hmmm. The machine had not spun out the final rinse water completely, so I tried to reset it on the spin cycle. No juice. I tried starting it on several other settings. Nada. Come to find out, it had blown a fuse. So, I reset the fuse and tried again. Still nothing. I tried unplugging the machine and resetting the fuse one more time. Pointless.

It really was not a surprise that the washer had finally quit. It had been making a horrific noise and vibrating with earthquake intensity for a couple of years already. It's a small miracle that the dryer stacked on top never fell off. So, yesterday we went to Home Depot and ordered a new pair. I've been to the laundromat once and will probably have to go again before they arrive. But, that's no big deal.

This morning I entered the laundry room to find water all over the floor. What the heck? Why is this thing leaking now, a week later?

I called Hubby in to survey the scene. He opined that the valve between the water line and the tub must have vibrated loose, causing the leak. Still seemed strange. I had been in the laundry room the day before and there was no water on the floor. Oh well. Hubby mopped and toweled up a bucket's worth of water and then left me to try to swipe a rag on a stick between the washer and the wall to finish up. It was during that process that I noticed a small puddle continuing to appear on the floor in front of the machine. I'd wipe it up, it would come back. Finally, I saw that the source of the puddle was water dribbling from the open door. Our machine is a front loader, and the water leak had apparently been slowly filling the tub. When it reached the level of the bottom of the door, it spilled over. Mystery solved.

I dipped approximately 13 gallons of water out of the tub and sopped up the rest with a bath towel. Hubby made sure the water lines were turned off. Things should stay dry now.

I won't complain about the TV antenna or the washing machine. A hundred years ago, my grandmothers were lucky to have radios and wringer washers. Heck, my mother didn't get an automatic washer until 1965! I can forego TV and an automatic clothes washer for a week or two.

But if the air conditioner goes on the blink during a heat wave, I reserve the right to whine and moan a little.

# Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Visits to the feeder of sunflower seeds outside my window on Fifth Street are few these days. The first brood of feathered hatchlings have now been fed and fattened for flight. The splash of Spring flowers has bloomed away, and it's too early for a burst of butterflies. In this uncertain pause I am reminded that July is now! and it feels like the downhill side of Summer already, though I remind myself Summer has only just arrived.

I have been working from home on my computer in my living room, or on my porch whenever I can, especially during glorious days of warm! I am trying to be conscious of life in the moment. But I am constantly aware of the biblical phrase; "This too, shall pass." But on a cold, dreary December day when I'm not pleasantly distracted by the Christmas season, that phrase is my warm mantra of hope.

August might mean "back to school," but that doesn't mean "end of Summer." Summer extends well into September and October is often one of the best months of the year for me, as long as there is a limit to the wind and rain to preserve the colors.

I'm afraid this Autumn will be a different experience. Probably a more difficult time, but I expect there will be some good with the bad, just as working at home feels good, mostly, with more time for reading, watching Netflix, or for just doing "nothing" a little more often.

I believe there will be a vaccine and there will be a time when I will appreciate "normal" so much more than before Covid-19. And I will have learned new things and in some cases, even better ways of living.

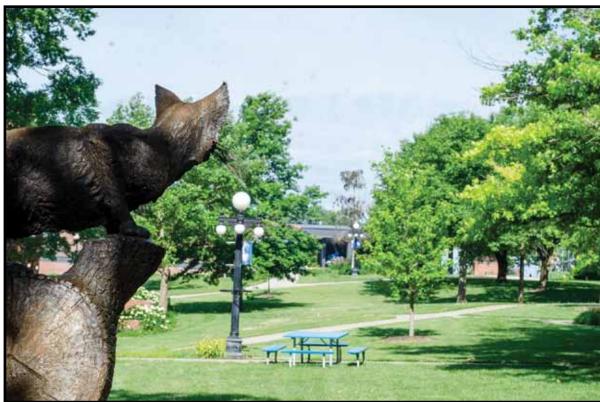
So there is much to look forward to, but right now we have the precious present. Sounds of life rather than sounds of cold. Soon cicadas will annoy many of us with their monotonous mating call. Mornings offer birdsongs and breezes, evenings offer crickets, frogs, a monthly moonrise and occasionally, lawns sparkling with lightning bugs. But maybe that's just through my window on Fifth Street. What's in your view?

For More "Windows" go to; yourcountryneighbor.com



# Campus Of A Thousand Oaks Peru State College Campus Photos





The PSC Bobcat gazes across the quad toward the Student Center.



Bobcat; between T.J.Majors and the Student Center



Familiar species bordering Neal Park and the PSC Campus.

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Bobcat, Stalking. Outside Wheeler Activity Center

July 2020 Your Country Neighbor



# Peru State College Summer Camps

# 2020 Peru State Summer Athletic Camps Announced



While they will be later than normally planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic, athletic camps of all kinds and varieties will be held on the Peru State campus yet this summer. Camps for girls and boys basketball, football, and volleyball will be held later in the summer than on their normal dates.

The following is a description of each athletic camp that will be held during the 2020 summer. It should be noted that all dates are subject to potential change dependent on Nebraska's Direct Health Measures. All camp activities will follow the guidance of healthcare providers, including the Southeast District Health Department, and the Nebraska Department of Education's Health Guidance for Summer Programming in the state of Nebraska.

#### **Football Camps**

Three separate day individual camps will be held for football players. In addition, a padded team camp will be conducted.

A one-day non-contact Youth Skills Camp will be conducted on Monday, July 13, for boys in grades 5-8. The camp will be conducted in the Oak Bowl and will cost \$40, which includes a camp t-shirt, sport drink, and lunch. The junior high camp will be broken into individual sessions followed by group sessions. Campers will be provided individual instruction and will leave camp better prepared for their upcoming season. Campers should wear a t-shirt and shorts as this will be a non-contact camp. The camp will run from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

On Tuesday, July 14, a High School Skills Camp will be conducted by the Bobcat football coaching staff and players. The camp for boys in grades 9-12 will be held from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Oak Bowl. Cost for the camp is \$40 and that includes lunch, sport drink, and a camp t-shirt. Campers will need to bring helmets and shoulder pads – not full pads.

An Offensive and Defensive Line Camp will be offered on Wednesday, July 15, for boys in grades 9-12. The camp will provide campers with the techniques and skill development necessary to be a successful lineman. The cost for the camp, conducted by the Bobcat coaches and guest coaches from the region, is \$40. The cost includes lunch, sport drink, and a t-shirt and it will run from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Campers are required to bring helmets and shoulder pads.

An 11-Man Team Camp for teams will be conducted Thursday and Friday, July 16 and 17, for athletes in grades 9-12 from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily. An 8-Man Team Camp will be conducted Monday and Tuesday, July 20 and 21, for athletes in grades 9-12 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily. The cost is \$40 per individual. This is for teams only and the space is limited.

For more information, campers and coaches interested in the team camps, should contact Bobcat coaching assistant Lou Varley @lvarley@peru. edu or 402-209-4787.

#### **Volleyball Camps**

Several camps for different ages will be conducted by the Bobcat volleyball coaching staff and players. The camp will be held in the Al Wheeler Activity Center (AWAC). Peru State will host a Passing Skills Clinic on July 27, a Setting and Attacking Skills Clinic on July 28, and an All Skills Clinic on July 29. On the 27th and 28th, the clinics will be divided between grades 1-4 which will take place from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and grades 5-8 which will take place from noon to 3 p.m. The cost of the July 27 and 28 clinics is only \$20 which includes a t-shirt. There is a \$5 discount per sibling registered.

The All Skills Clinic will take place from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. for grades 9 through 12. Its cost is \$50. Lunch will be included for this camp. The \$5 discount per sibling registered applies for this camp as well. Each participant will receive a t-shirt. For more information, campers should contact Bobcat head volleyball coach Laurie Felderman@peru.edu or by phone at 920-639-5844.

#### **Girls Basketball Camps**

On August 6 and 7, a Bobcats Girls' Basketball Camp will be conducted from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. each day for girls grades 1-4. From 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on those same days, a camp will be held for girls in grades 5-10. Campers will receive daily instruction to address all areas of skill development. The cost for each camp is \$50 with a \$5 discount for siblings and a \$5 discount for two or more from the same school. Each participant will receive a basketball. For more information, campers should contact Bobcat women's basketball head coach Joan Albury at jalbury@peru.edu or by phone at 731-617-1546.

#### **Boys Basketball Camps**

One basketball camp will be held for boys on August 3-5. The Offensive Skills Camp will be conducted for boys in grades 3-12. This camp will run from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. each day. The camp will consist of stations, contests, competitions, and skill work. The cost for the camp is \$70. Campers will receive a camp t-shirt and will have the opportunity to compete for medals in various skill contests. Campers will need to bring a change of shoes as street shoes are not allowed on the AWAC playing floor. Campers can check in at 8:30 a.m. for the 9:00 a.m. session. For more information, campers should contact Bobcat men's basketball coach Bob Ludwig at rludwig@peru.edu or by phone at 402-872-2417.

#### All Camps

For more information on each camp conducted this summer, along with the required forms, please go to the hyperlink of www.perustatecamps.com.

# PERU STATE COLLEGE FALL ATHLETICS

### The NAIA National Office released its Plans for the Fall Season.

The NAIA noted its plan was guided first and foremost for the health and safety of the student-athletes. The second priority of the NAIA was to help its member institutions to plan for a return to campus and for a successful fall term.

The following are the national recommendations made by the Council of Presidents (COP) Executive Committee:

#### 1. Return to Play Threshold

The COP Executive Committee approved the use of a threshold system as a guideline for determining return to play. The threshold goal is for about half the participating institutions in each sport to receive clearance from local authorities to return to competition before the season can begin. For example, NAIA football has 95 participating institutions. When half (47) of these programs gain clearance from authorities to play, the NAIA football season will be authorized to begin.

The rationale for this decision is that a significant number of institutions need to participate to offer student-athletes a significant competitive and championship-caliber experience. Additionally, the fewer the number of participating programs, the higher the likelihood for scheduling challenges leading to increased travel costs and missed class time.

#### 2. Start Dates

Based on input from NAIA presidents, Athletic Directors, commissioners, athletics trainers and health care professionals, the COP Executive Committee approved a recommendation of practice and competition start dates for each sport. The practice start date for all sports, will be Saturday, August 15. As a result, from today through August 14, any activities deemed practice by the NAIA are strictly prohibited.

Beginning August 15, student-athletes may practice consistent with any health and safety protocols your institution deems necessary. While practices can begin August 15, only individuals identified with member institutions can participate in these practices. No scrimmages, exhibitions, or competitions of any kind that involve individuals not identified with a member institution may take place prior to the competition start dates that follow.

#### **Competition start dates are as follows:**

All sports except football: September 5 (providing 3 weeks of practice prior to competition).

Football: September 12 (providing 4 weeks of practice prior to competition).

These start dates apply to all sports that schedule practices or competitions in the fall, regardless of when the regular season is played.

The rationale behind the selection of those dates was to provide an adequate acclimatization, conditioning and practice period prior to competition for each sport, while minimizing the need for student-athletes to return to campus early. Establishing start dates also creates a more level playing field for all institutions that are able to compete this fall.

#### 3. Maximum Contests Allowed

With the delayed start dates, there are fewer weeks to complete the season. As a result, the COP Executive Committee approved a reduction in the maximum number of contests as follows:

Cross Country: 7 meets, down from 8
Football: 9 games, down from 11
Men's and Women's Soccer: 14 games, down from 18
Women's Volleyball: 22 dates, down from 28

The reductions are proportional to the shortened seasons and are consistent with recent feedback from presidents, athletics directors, and commissioners expressing a desire to reduce regular season costs.

Currently, the NAIA intends to host all fall national championship events as currently scheduled. Obviously the NAIA cannot predict what will happen in the next six months, but they are optimistic that the championships will be hosted as planned.

The national office and the COP Executive Committee are currently examining various options for health and safety protocols, including testing and screening, and will share decisions related to these areas as soon as they are made.

While the NAIA focus was initially on fall sports, they know there are already concerns related to the winter sport season. At this time, there are no planned changes for winter sports. The NAIA will begin to evaluate the possible impact of COVID-19 on the winter season and prioritize any decisions that will help our institutions prepare for possible adjustments, if necessary.

#### **How Does This Affect the Peru State Bobcats?**

Peru State offers four fall sports teams – football, volleyball, women's cross country, and men's cross country. While it is not totally official, it is anticipated that the first two football games of Aug. 29 at Missouri Valley and the Sept. 5 home opener with Evangel (MO) will be dropped. The Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) COP and Board of Governors will be meeting soon to finalize that plan. If that is the case, Peru State's first football game will be Sept. 12 at Benedictine in Atchison, KS, at 1 p.m. The Bobcats' first home contest would then be Sept. 19 against MidAmerica Nazarene (KS). The game time initially had been set for 6 p.m., but could change with the new schedule. That weekend, Sept. 18 and 19, is scheduled as Peru State's Hall of Fame weekend.

The Bobcat volleyball coaches were already working on rearranging their schedule following Thursday's announcements. Initially, Peru State was to open its schedule on the road facing the University of St. Mary in Leavenworth, Kan., on Aug. 27. Additionally, they were to have played several additional contests prior to the new Sept. 5 start date. As soon as a new schedule is finalized, it will be posted on the College's website.



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